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Ústav anglického jazyka a didaktiky

Some aspects of hip hop nation language (HHNL) from a linguistic point  
of view

Některé aspekty jazyka hip hopu z lingvistického hlediska

Bakalářská práce

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„Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla všechny použité prameny a literaturu. V Praze dne 18. 8. 2011“

(I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned).

## **Some aspects of *hip hop nation language* (HHNL) from a linguistic point of view**

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## **1. Introduction – why choosing this particular topic**

The aim of this project is to explore some selected aspects of hip hop nation language (further referred to as HHNL) as produced by hip hop culture representatives from the United States of America.

This branch of English Language that many consider almost incomprehensible has recently made its way to popular culture. Roughly two decades ago hip hop artists, previously known as an underground stream of artists, have made a swift move to the mainstream, thus making themselves and their particular language familiar to millions of people. Having said that, the move to mainstream, referred to as "crossover" made the language lose its authenticity and roots.

English language as such is a Lingua Franca and for this very fact there are many variations of this language nowadays. These variations do not adhere to prescribed grammatical rules and rather evolve into their own directions – creating their own grammatical rules and their own lexis. Many of such variations have been extensively described while others remain on the fringe of linguists' interests. The reason why the author of this project chose HHNL is because it seems to be precisely one of these variations linguists have thus far avoided and for this very reason it should be addressed.

## **2. Description and the Background**

This thesis will study the language of hip hop in the United States of America. First, in theoretical part, it will introduce hip hop as a culture, its history and background and the role of rap in it. Then in connection the language of hip hop and its crucial role will be presented, as well as the studies interested in this language, mainly sociolinguistics. The language will then be compared to African American English (that being the basis of the language of hip hop), which will be briefly described as well in order to draw the relationship between the two. The thesis will also outline modes of discourse used in hip hop nation language and finally it will present the artists whose work has been chosen for the analysis.

In the second, practical, part the analysis of the language will be done, lexical as well as grammatical. Lexical research will be presented on approximately 130 vocables isolated from the texts in dictionary form. Those units will be analyzed as well as translated into standard American English. Grammatical analysis will then isolate all the non standard features of hip hop nation language in terms of both morphology and syntax. Thus the result should create guidelines for a reader interested in comprehending HHNL, it should point out diversities and alterations and suggest the range of interest of HHNL.

## 2.1. History and outline of hip hop culture, its defining features

**hip** adj. a slang term, meaning fashionably current, in the know, opposite to terms *square*, *prude*, originates in African American Vernacular English (Wi)

**hop** meaning the hopping movement (Wi)

Hip hop culture is an artistic way of expressing oneself. It is a culture with origins in Bronx, New York City in the United States of America, beginning in the 1970s. Hip hop culture could be divided into several major branches which are:

3. MCing/rapping
4. DJing/scratching
5. breaking
6. graffiti writing
7. sampling
8. beatboxing

Even though Bronx is the home of hip hop, its origins could be traced back to Jamaica, to the culture called **toasting** – “*impromptu, boastful poetry and speech over music*”. (Wikipedia, 2011). This particular Jamaican influence is attributed to Clive Campbell (AKA DJ Kool Herc), Jamaican born hip hop groundbreaker, who moved to Bronx at the age of 13 and who introduced the tradition of toasting to what is to become the hip hop nation. Campbell, however, did not only introduce toasting. He is also credited with inventing **break – beat deejaying**. Break – beat deejaying is separating a break of a song and repeating it to create a suitable dance music. Music for break – beat deejaying was usually funk or rock, making them basis of hip hop. Campbell's break – beat deejaying also included his announcements over the music. Those were rhymed and are what we now call rap, another defining feature of hip hop music. The culture of breaking (break dancing) is the kind of dance that was danced to break – beat deejaying and Campbell called the people who break danced b-boys and b-girls, which are terms originated even before hip hop culture was defined. All of these, as well as graffiti art and fashion then became a part of an underground urban movement called **hip hop**. (Wikipedia, 2011) (The history of hip hop, 2011)

Hip hop became so popular among the people 'on the streets'. Finally there was a possibility for the people to express themselves artistically, this form of art was something they understood. One of the pioneers of hip hop Afrika Bambaata realized that this could limit the violence in these

communities and he created a confederation of street dancers, graffiti artists and rappers called **Zulu Nation**. These all used to be gang members now rather break dancing or battling artistically against each other instead of fighting. Hip hop soon got media attention and became a famous phenomenon and soon another branch of hip hop – beatboxing evolved. Some artist would use their body parts to create a human beatbox – imitating instrument beats with their lips, tongue or other body parts. (Wikipedia, 2011)

The social aspect of hip hop was huge. Hip hop was credited with saving lives of teenagers giving them something to focus on and in terms of rap there were more and more social issues addressed by rappers. The people also had a chance to earn money in the evolving industry of hip hop, thus again helping the community. During the years the focus has shifted. The social problems addressed by Tupac Shakur in the early 1990s were replaced by what is now called **gangsta rap**, a rap “*concentrating on drugs, violence or misogyny*” of 50 Cent or Jay-Z. (Wikipedia, 2011)

For the purposes of this thesis we will not address all the pillars of hip hop. It would be an extensive task and being that this is a linguistic study the one pillar we will focus on will be MCing (or rapping).

**rap** v. means *to hit*, used in British English from the 16th century, in the 18th century the meaning shifted to *say*, AAVE adopted the term in 1960s and the meaning again shifted to *converse*, today English uses it in context of musical style (Wi)

## Rap

The most important of hip hop culture in terms of language is of course rap. As stated rapping is rhymed speaking over the music beat, but it is something that existed long before the culture of hip hop ever emerged. Rapping has its origins in Africa, as well as in Jamaica. African folk poets and Jamaican style of aforementioned toasting are both origins of rapping. Rapping as such was a part of hip hop music, but also of reggae, it is stylistically very hard to define, because it is not clear whether it is a “*speech, prose, poetry or song.*” (Wikipedia, 2011)

Before becoming distinctive to hip hop, rap was a part of blues in the 1920s, stating that blues „*was being rapped*“. (Wikipedia, 2011) It was also jazz and its poetry that preceded hip hop not only in terms of music, but also in terms of lyrics. Stylistically and formally hip hop has been compared to jazz.



Rap could be divided into three basic components, those are

4. content
5. flow (rhythm and rhyme)
6. delivery

Content of rapping moved from jolly subjects such as partying and love to sociopolitical and social issues, such as poverty, police brutality, teenage pregnancy, class, race and the like. These subject matters were the major ones for some time until the matter of crime took over. Rap with this subject matter is called **gangsta rap** and it uses very specific slang. Another topic includes materialism and rappers often presenting how rich they are and what they own. To do this it is popular to rap about famous and expensive brands of cars, clothes or alcohol. Except for these mainstream themes, there are also others, not so widespread, such as Christian or other religious rap. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Nowadays **gangsta rap** is the most commercially successful rap. It can be traced back to the 1980s and it has been extremely controversial since. Criticism states that rappers promote violence, drug trafficking, racism and the like, while rappers answer that they only describe the urban situation of the communities in which they grew up. (Wikipedia, 2011)

The literary techniques used in rap include various forms of word plays, such as alliteration and metaphor is of course a part of rap, too. Dialect or language used in hip hop is on the other hand very specific. It has its own vocabulary, often using regional slang or developing new lexicon, even though it is very close to AAVE. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Rap can be performed as a freestyle – either a recited (written in advance) one or an improvised one. Freestyle is used in battles – rapping contests where rappers fight each other. Of course the best rappers in battle are those who are able to improvise because they can react in the moment to the occurring situation. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Flow means stressing the syllables in order to match the beat. There are various styles of flow as well as there are various rhyme schemes (such as multisyllabic rhyme) used by rappers. It has been noted that rap is the richest art form in terms of rhyme nowadays. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Delivery is also very important. To deliver rap properly one has to be able to control his breath very precisely, because failing that might cause unwanted pauses. (Wikipedia, 2011)

## 2.2.Importance of language in hip hop culture

The importance of language in hip hop culture could be observed from various view points, the first being the one of the HHN and the second being the government's one. All of the hip hop culture originally centered around the message that is send to the world via rap. It was just a different form of poetry. For people who came from ghetto backgrounds rap was the only way of expressing themselves, the words were the only weapons they could use. Even nowadays when hip hop has gone commercial many rappers emphasize the importance of the language for the people from the ghettos. On the other hand in recent years government of the United States has been bringing up the question of language used in rap being harmful for the children, because of its controversial content; certainly within the context of many acts of aggression inside those communities. Hip hop artists have, of course, responded to this issue in many of their songs as well and thereby popularized the problem and turned it into an ongoing highly publicized dispute. Here is an example in one of Eminem's singles:

*They say music can alter moods and **talk** to you*

**But can it load a gun for you and cock it too?**

*Well if it can, then the next time you assault a dude*

*Just tell the judge it was my fault, and i'll get sued*

Eminem, Sing For The Moment (Eminem, 2003)

What also needs to be stated is the fact that the people from the ghettos dislike their language being used by the others. It is an important issue addressed in popular culture (this problem is being referred to in a lot of films and television series, for example in the film Havoc) and was also an issue when one of the most famous white rappers Marshall Bruce Mathers III. (Eminem) gained popularity in the year 1999 due to the sociolinguistic combination of his race and language.

The importance of the language in hip hop is crucial. Rap, as a part of hip hop is expressing oneself by talking to the music beat as it was stated in the beginning, thus we can say that the language is fundamental. Important are both, semantics and form.

*“Hip hop LX (linguistics). In Hip hop the WORD is the message. Language is a system of sounds and symbols and communication in any language is based on how to use that system. If you know the system, you have power over ideas and imagination. You can build, change, plan, play and destroy. Many words and expressions in hip hop represent regions, neighborhoods and cities. Hip hop Lx is dedicated to representing the words and expressions that represent and serve as a symbol for a region and area. It explores the language system of hip hop and how the word came into being, meanings and the overall development of the word and expression. It challenges everyone to represent their region with true bona fide words and present them to be researched, examined, challenged and celebrated.”* (Hip Hop Archive, 2011)

Generally it could be stated that the language of hip hop represents every issue which could be analyzed in connection to hip hop. From linguistic, to political and social to cultural. It is the form of the language that represents the need of belonging to a certain group and it is the form that could be easily misunderstood the speakers to be poorly educated (for many to assume that these speakers are speaking standard American English “improperly”, because they do not know how to speak properly, when in fact they speak in another dialect and many of them are perfectly capable of switching to standard American English) (Patric, 2006) and it is the semantics that points out what the important concepts are in the society producing hip hop, because as the forthcoming analysis will present there are much more words standing for certain denotata in HHNL than in standard American English and that fact itself declares the value systems of the speakers of certain languages or dialects.

Language is prestige. It always gives away what one is not even saying. The social status, class, ethnicity, gender or other factors. Language is identity. Using particular terms associated with hip hop will send a certain message. It will state the group belonging. On the other hand we often see people using foreign accents in order to ridicule, but also simply to make it clear they are not members of that group. The language is what creates authenticity questions. Authenticity is of great importance in hip hop. Hip hop is a culture emerging in the streets – poor African American ghettos

of south Bronx. But nowadays there are numerous hip hop followers among middle class and not only African Americans, but whites as well (one of the most successful rappers of the 2000s is white). Many hip hop fans are also educated contrary to the expectations. There a difference in the language use emerges. It is possible to see the importance of the language in hip hop when observing the white hip hoppers trying to “*perform*” this speech. They try to do so in order to present their being a part of this community. (Hip Hop Nation, 2011)

### 2.3. The concept of “nation language“ and HHNL

There are certain complications when it comes to the language of hip hop being called the 'nation language'. What is the nation of this so-called language. Alim states that the nation of hip hop is the nation living 'in the streets'. (Alim, 2006)

*“Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL; see Alim, 2003, 2004; Spady, Lee, and Alim, 1999) is the primary means by which the members of the Hip Hop Nation (HHN) express their unique and diverse cultures.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

The importance of the language is crucial and evident from the names of the hip hop songs or albums: “(“New Rap Language” - Treacherous Three 1980, “Wordplay” Bahamadia 1996, “Gangsta Vocabulary” DJ Pooh 1997, “Project Talk” Bobby Digital 1998, “Slang Editorial” Cappadonna 1998, *Real Talk 2000* Three-X-Krazy 2000, “Ebonics” Big L 2000, *Country Grammar* Nelly 2000 and *Project English* Juvenile 2001”) (Alim, 2006)

Alim also cites Caribbean historian Kamau Brathwaite who defines another nation language (the one in Caribbean: *“Nation Language is the language which is influenced very strong by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English.”* (Alim, 2006)

The term 'nation language' as such functions as a contrast to 'dialect' because it refers to language strongly influenced by African model and also because of the pejorative sound of the word dialect. Language *“comprises elements of orality, total expression, and conversational modes.”* (Brathwaite 1984) (Alim, 2006)

The word *language* does not only describe grammar. It describes discourses and means of communication, as well as the sociolinguistic role of the language for the community (that being either group binding or differentiation). There is whole language concept, *“clothes, facial expressions, body movements, overall communication”*. (Alim, 2006)

Another reason for calling it the 'nation language' is because it identifies the HHN. H. Samy Alim

states that HHNL can be characterized by ten tenets:

1. HHNL belongs to the AAE group
2. It is just one of the languages use by African Americans
3. HHNL is spoken by various ethnic groups in/out of the USA
4. HHNL is a language with its own grammar, lexicon, and phonology as well as unique communicative style and discursive modes
5. HHNL is a synergistic combination of speech, music and literature
6. HHNL includes attitudes about language and language use
7. HHNL is central to the identity and the act of envisioning an entity known as the HHNL
8. There are regional varieties in HHNL
9. HHNL is central to the lifeworlds of the members of the HHNL and suitable and functional for all of their communicative needs.
10. HHNL is inextricably linked with the sociopolitical circumstances that engulf the HHN. (Alim, 2006)

## 2.4. Studies of HHNL

To study HHNL is extremely interesting especially from the sociolinguistic point of view. While hip hop has become one of the most successful genres of the present its language is still perceived as a language of the uneducated and is socially undesirable.

Hip hop as such is originated in the society which is influenced by numerous social, cultural and political problems of today's society, such as racism, poverty, drug abuse and drug dealing, underage parenting, larceny and other criminal activities involving for example weapon possessions. These social aspects of course influence HHN and are represented in their art, which is natural. A reflection of one's self in one's art. (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

Typically the people who come from HHN are self-sustaining people. What they do not do for themselves nobody else will. In the society where it is almost impossible to gain any kind of material success, respect is one of the basic and natural needs one can gain. (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

The society in which hip hop was originated lives by relatively 'raw' rules. Stronger survives, weaker does not. The society is thus very competitive and to gain respect in this society is possible when you take it from somebody else. To humiliate other person is to promote one's self. This can be observed in the most typical rap contest called battle. Battle is a competition of two rappers against each other. They are supposed to respond to what the other one has to say and to dishonor the rival. Obviously, the better one wins and gains respect of the viewers. (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

*“First, battle discourse is intended to negotiate **respect and social status**, while simultaneously functioning as a creative outlet for verbal art and craftsmanship. It is an intensely competitive speech genre whose aim is the **verbal domination** and humiliation of one's opponents so as to decrease their status and increase one's own. ”* (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

In this case language is the main mean of gaining respect. Ergo, its importance is obvious. It is undeniable. If you speak like the others 'on the street' you present that you belong with them. This is a very logical and natural simile for HHN (for example members of one street gang always have a color to distinguish themselves and it is the same thing with the language) and for any society for

that matter. Not only does the fact that they speak in the same way connects them, but it is also the fact that they speak differently from the mainstream society. (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

The fact that respect is crucial for HHN is also visible in the other aspects of this society. Numerous rappers pride themselves with the money they earned by selling drugs. Jim Fitzpatrick happens to mention the two rappers whose work this paper analyzes and those are Jay-Z and 50 Cent.

*“The commodification of respect in the hip hop community reflects the conditions encountered by many young MC's coming up in the city. Rappers such as Jay-Z and 50 Cent readily admit selling drugs to alleviate some of the excruciating poverty they encountered early in their lives. These two rappers, along with other nationally recognized artists with similar backgrounds, take pride in having escaped the poverty trap and reached the pinnacle of financial success, which carries with it a certain level of respect.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

In the forthcoming analysis I came across a word in HHNL that would itself point this out. Its denotatum is a socially disadvantaged person who succeeded in either basketball or criminal activities and the word is **baller**. It is obvious that beforehand the only way to get out of the ghetto for a young African – American was to play basketball, now the meaning is spreading, but still in standard American English for this denotatum there is no one word. It is necessary to describe it.

But in HHN it is not enough to succeed. One has to see to it that everybody else knows it.

*“Rather than let these success stories speak for themselves, however, many rappers fight even harder to sustain this new – found level of respect. In a fickle music industry, there is no guarantee of continued success over years or even months; thus, confrontational, in – your – face behavior becomes necessary to maintain record sales, financial stability, and consequently respect.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

Again it was very obvious from the analysis of HHNL that social status is something very important for this community. Rappers tend to state how rich they are, or which material possessions they own loud and clear. This would be unacceptable elsewhere, but for HHNL it is typical. There are companies producing expensive cars, there are dollar bills, expensive drinks, drugs, all of that is a



part of their expressing.

This is of course given by the conditions in which the people are raised. Extreme poverty and violence sets ground for this behavior and not only for taking pride in talking about doing criminal activities, but also doing criminal activities. Violence is natural there. Children who grow up in these communities cannot and do not know or recognize any other value systems. (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

*“Anderson describes the conditions faced by many poor families on a daily basis and the way of life which has arisen from these socioeconomic circumstances. In a world where violence, drug trafficking, and broken families abound, the norms which govern “decent” (Anderson, 1999: 32) behavior do not always apply.”* (Fitzpatrick, 2007)

The value system is also traceable in HHNL. Where there are only a few terms for a denotatum in standard American English, for the same denotatum there are numerous terms in HHNL. This applies to guns, bullets, act of killing, all sorts of drugs and so on.

## 2.5. A brief overview of AAL and its relation to HHNL

African American language, Black English, Black Vernacular or simply Ebonics are only some of the names used for the variety of English used mainly by the African Americans in certain communities. The name itself is of interest for sociolinguistics since originally it was called Negro speech, Negro English or Negro American dialect. The contemporary connotations of the word Negro however do not allow for the word to be used academically anymore. The question also was whether AAL is a slang, dialect or a single variety of English. Today it applies that:

*“AAE is a systematic language variety, with patterns of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and usage that extend far beyond slang. Because it has a set of rules that is distinct from those of Standard American English, characterizations of the variety as bad English are incorrect; speakers of AAE do not fail to speak Standard American English, but succeed in speaking African American English with all its systematicity. Linguists are less concerned with whether or not AAE is a language or a dialect (terms that are more important socially and politically than linguistically) than with recognizing the systematic nature of AAE.”* (Center For Applied Linguistics, 2011)

Nevertheless what we refer to is *“the North American English characteristically spoken by the descendants of Africans brought to Americas under slavery”* (Patric, 2006)

AAE includes various dialects as well as various oral discourse styles. One of them is African – American Vernacular English (AAVE), which is connected to the informal contexts, urban lifestyle and what young African – Americans speak like. In the mainstream society AAVE is in fact viewed as the only AAE and therefore the assumption is made that it is the language of the uneducated, with non existing grammatical system, not to mention the fact that the slang of the adolescents African – Americans is often being mistaken for AAVE and thus for AAE creating the same disservice for AAE. (Patric, 2006)

AAVE has a grammatical system which differentiates from the standard American English (SAE). It has syntactical and phonological similarities with Southern White vernacular English (SWVE) and with Carribean English creoles (CECs), lexical similarities with CECs and it has its own specific

discourse, only typical for AAVE. (Patric, 2006)

Here are some of the linguistic descriptions of AAVE:

1. “main verbs and auxiliaries (**be, do, have**) have regular paradigms, without person / number agreement: third singular irregular forms are absent
2. auxiliary [verb] **be**: the **is** form is generalized to all present persons and numbers (except first singular **am**), and **was** to all in the past
3. regularizing simple past and present perfect verb forms [alike in SAE]: they frequently merge in the simple past, although some participial forms are preferred
4. the normal phonological reduction [of the auxiliary verb will] to 'll is variably extended to complete vocalization and deletion
5. question formation optionally involves inverting auxiliaries and modals
6. auxiliaries may fail to surface in questions, and may invert in embedded questions
7. aspectual markers take form in Vernacular American English auxiliaries **be, been, done, had** (**had** marking the simple past, nondirectional **come** express[ing] speaker indignation and stressed **been** [expressing] remote past)
8. with stative verbs, **been** denotes continuity to the present moment
9. less familiar AAVE preverbal aspect markers include the immediate future **finna** (SWVE **fixing to**), the completive **done**, the resultative be done, and **steady** marking an intensified continuative
10. requiring concord with indefinite object noun phrases
11. verbal **-s** and possessive and plural **-s** may be absent
12. associated plurals (Doretha an' (th)em)
13. pronominal features include pleonastic it and they in existential constructions
14. invariant forms of plural possessives (yall, they)
15. occasional object forms for subjects (us)
16. glide reduction in /ai/ (tie) /i/ (boil)

17. front – stressing (po'lice, De' troit)
18. pin/pen merger in [ɛ] before nasals
19. final consonant cluster reduction, significantly before vowels (firs' apple)
20. deletion of initial voiced stops /d,g/ in auxiliaries
21. realization of syllable – initial /str/ as /skr/ before high front vowels (street /[skrit])
22. final singleton consonants: reduction and loss of nasality in final nasals
23. deletion of word – finale single consonants after a vowel (cat)
24. final voiced stops are devoiced and sometimes glottalized (bad)” (Patric, 2006)

AAE is however just a broader context of what we are interested in. HHNL is what stems from AAE in a sense that majority of the HHN are AAE speakers and on it's basis they created their special HHNL. (H. Samy Alim, Hip Hop Language). One of the most interesting area of the HHNL is lexicon. Currently there are both academic and urban studies or dictionaries of it since rap music introduced this language to general public. People then often look for the answers to what a certain word means in the context. One of the many dictionaries online is ***www.urbandictionary.com*** which contains 10,5 million definitions. (Wikipedia, 2011)

## **2.6. A brief overview of HHNL modes of discourse**

H. Samy Alim applied Smitherman's (1977) Black modes of discourse to HHNL. There are four of them, and those are the following:

1. call-response
2. multilayer totalizing expression
3. signifying/bustin
4. tonal semantics and poetics (Alim, 2006)
5. narrative sequencing and flow
6. battling

In this chapter we will focus on the first three modes of discourse which are of importance for the purposes of this paper. The other three are not addressed in this paragraph, however they are commented on in other chapters – especially the battling discourse which is also of high linguistic interest.

What H. Samy Alim does is examine these modes based on various forms of HHNL data - rap lyrics, hip hop performances and hip hop conversational discourse. Most of the data examined here were from film, television, video and audio CDs and only one live hip hop concert. (Alim, 2006)

### **Call-response**

“As a communicative strategy this call and response is the manifestation of the cultural dynamic which finds audience and listener or leader and background to be unified whole. Shot through with action and interaction. Black communicative performance is concentric in quality — the 'audience' becoming both observers and participants in the speech event. As Black American culture stresses commonality and group experientiality, the audience's linguistic and paralinguistic responses are necessary to co-sign the power of the speakers rap or call.” (Daniel and Smitherman 1976, cited in Spady 2000: 59) (Alim, 2006)

This means that when 50 Cent and Lloyd Banks had a concert for MTV Spring Break 2 and Lloyd

Banks asked the crowd to 'make some noooooise' the crowd responded with cheer. When he said 'OK, OK, can I get a G-Unit?' the crowd responded in 'G-Unit!' and finally he only had to say 'G-Unit' and the people responded immediately 'G-Unit'. Last thing Lloyd Banks asked from the crowd was 'put your hands up' and the people did so. That shows that call-response does not work only on oral level, but also on physical one. (Alim, 2006)

The question of signification is even more interesting from linguistic point of view because it refers to what we could call 'coding of the language'. In various poor neighborhoods of African Americans or Latino Immigrants there is a need for a language that would be incomprehensible to the police and that is the dynamic part of the HHNL. These encoded words change very fast because the longer they are used the higher the possibility of police understanding them. (Alim, 2006)

A lot of words that were originated in this manner are now used regularly in HHNL.

### **Multilayerd totalizing expression**

This is very tightly connected to the call-response mode of discourse. Multilayerd totalizing expression is one step above call-response. It includes all of the levels of calling of the artists and all of the levels of response of the audience. Together these create something “*even beyond total expression*” What Alim presents here is an extract of his fieldnotes where there is a connection between Djs, MCs – freestyle rapping and audience as well. (Alim, 2006)

### **Signifying and bustin (bussin)**

Signifying as such is something like coding. It revolves around the idea that the meanings of the language go often beyond their meaning prescribed by the dictionaries. Signifying means using the language to one's advantage, often to disrespect one's opponent or to present one's superiority in a little more delicate way. “It often includes indirection” (Alim, ) To describe it even more thoroughly Mitchell-Kernan's words may be used: “*The black concept of signifying incorporates essentially a folk notion that dictionary entries for words are not always sufficient for interpreting meanings or*

*messages, or that meaning goes beyond such interpretations. Complimentary remarks may be delivered in a left-handed fashion. A particular utterance may be an insult in one context and not in another. What pretends to be informative may intend to be persuasive. Superficially, self-abasing remarks are frequently self-praise.” (Mitchell-Kernan, 1971) (Alim, 2006)*

Signifying is a major issue when it comes to hip hop language because it also refers to the street slang, a huge and important part of HHNL. Street slang is a very rapidly changing slang, one a person has to follow very thoroughly otherwise the meaning behind the words will be no longer evident for them. Alim gives an example of slang terms for the police (first it was 5-0, then po-pos, pigs etc.). These slang terms have a very short lifespan, because if they are used for a longer period of time police themselves will understand it and that is exactly the function of these slang terms – for the police or outsiders not to understand. Thus we might say that for a person to keep up with the street slang it is necessary to be in the streets, because the minute one disappears, the minute the slang changes. (Alim, 2006)

## **2.7. Profiles of Tupac Shakur, Jay-Z and 50 Cent as particular hip hop culture representatives and the source of the sample**

The choice of the artist who would represent the certain aspects of HHNL was not easy. There are many whose works would present linguistic differences, but the reason for choosing Tupac Shakur, 50 Cent and Jay – Z was that not only their language, but also their background and issues from their personal lives. All three of these rappers fit perfectly into the profile of HHNL speakers. All of them grew up in poverty, all of them were involved with drug trafficking and other criminal activities. I also chose them because all three of them are in the top ten most famous rappers in the history of hip hop and their language is very specific. Tupac Shakur was also addressing social issues of the time in his lyrics and he belonged to a family of black activists. All three artists are also recognized and respected by the HHN and that as stated is of importance. Thus their language can be truly considered to be the language of the HHN, because these artists share a common background with the rest of the HHN.

**50 Cent**, born July 6, 1975, is Curtis James Jackson's stage name. He is an African American rapper and actor. 50 Cent was born in South Jamaica, the neighborhood of Queens, New York City to his mother, a fifteen year old cocaine dealer, who was killed when Jackson was twelve years old. At that same age he started dealing drugs himself and got arrested in high school after bringing a weapon to school. Jackson decided to use the nickname 50 Cent because it depicted everything he believed in. 50 Cent was originally a famous Brooklyn's robber's nickname.

During his life Jackson was involved in various criminal activities, involving drug possession and drug dealing, which resulted in an infamous shooting on Jackson. The rapper was shoot nine times and survived. (Wikipedia, 2011)

50 Cent was discovered by Jam Master Jay and started his career in 1996. However, he did not become popular with general public until the year 2003 when he released his album *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* featuring the production of Eminem. In the United States of America this is the fourth highest selling rap albums. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Jackson's personal background influences not only the content of his lyrics, but also the language which he uses. The fact that many hip hop artist do share these experiences is what helped to introduce a particular lexis which is typical for hip hop language, as is specified in the forthcoming analysis.

**Tupac Amaru Shakur** (stage name 2Pac, Pac, Makaveli), June 16, 1971 – September 13, 1996, was an African American rapper, who was famously shot dead in 1996. Tupac was born in the East Harlem, New York City into a family hugely involved with the Black Panther Party – a black



nationalist party. Shakur's life was affected by this, because both, his mother and his stepfather had difficulties with the law from Tupac's young age, as well as his sister, to whom Shakur helped escape from prison. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Shakur's family soon moved away from Harlem and he attended the Baltimore School for Arts and studied jazz, ballet and acting. He was the most successful rapper in school and his work was very much influenced by his background. Tupac was conscious of the social problems, poverty and racism and he addressed all of these issues in his music.(Wikipedia, 2011)

He started his career while dancing with a hip hop band Digital Underground and then became one of the most successful rappers in a very short period of time. Shakur had a conflict with the law all of his life and in 1994 he was sentenced for molesting. He was the first person to ever have had a number one album sold while being in jail. After serving a part of his sentence 1,4 million dollars bail was paid to get Tupac out of prison so that he could record again. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Shakur was involved in the East-Coast West-Coast notorious feud and in 1994 he was shot five times after which he was operated on and left the hospital three hours after the surgery. In 1996 he was shot dead in Las Vegas in his car. Speculations surround Shakur's murder to this day. (Wikipedia, 2011)

**Jay-Z** was born December 6, 1969 as Shawn Corey Carter. Carter is one of the most successful rappers of all times, billing approximately 450 million dollars in 2010. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Carter was born in Brooklyn, New York, where he, like many of his colleagues, grew up in the poor social conditions. His father left the family, his brother was a criminal and Carter shot him after he attempted to steal his jewelry at the age of twelve. Carter himself was expelled from high school for dealing crack. Amazingly enough he has succeeded in turning his life around, he started his career in 1996 as a rapper and he has won 13 Grammy awards so far. He has also managed to become a high profile business person. He owns Def Jam Records, Roc-A-Fella Records and Roc Nation. He also owns a share of 40/40 club and a share of a basketball team New Jersey Nets and he started his own clothing line Rocawear. Carter is married to R&B singer Beyoncé. Together with 50 Cent and Eminem he is one of the most famous active rappers. (Wikipedia, 2011)

For this research he is particularly interesting because of his background. It is the background typical for HHN and it has a crucial influence on the language of the artist.

### **3. Description of the project**

Practical part of the thesis was based on the selection of such texts, which would be of significance in drawing the differences between HHNL and SAE. Some texts of course use more HHNL than others, mostly because of the aesthetic function of the language – it is simply about what rhymes and which syllabic pattern is used and words are then chosen accordingly. Finally I decided to analyze these selected texts because they offer a variety of lexical and grammatical features of interest. Also the texts chosen are from two evolutionary stages of rap, the first being mostly social rap of Tupac Shakur in the early 1990s and the second being the so-called gangsta rap of Jay-Z and 50 Cent from the 2000s.

#### **3.1. Aims of the study: specific features of the language the study will focus on**

In the first part the study will focus on lexical differences of HHNL from the standard American English. Those include all of the terms – even the terms that seem to be standard, but have other meanings and also the usage of names, nicknames and product names. In the second part morphological and syntactical features of HHNL will be analyzed. The aim of the study is to give an outline for readers who are interested in comprehending HHNL. The outline is of course brief due to the limited length of the paper, however, after reading the paper a reader should know where to look for in case they encounter with an unknown lexical term or grammatical construction.

My major source for the lexicon was [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) and it has to be stated that this is dictionary written by the people – the speakers of the language who observe it as a living thing. I analyzed the data and I used what was relevant for this particular research in the context of the lyrics I choose. However, for numerous terms I listed there are more interpretations, frequently there are numerous meanings either changing with time or region.

#### **3.2 Analysis of the sample, presentation of the results, findings and conclusions**

The analysis of the sample focuses on lexical and grammatical differences between HHNL and standard American English. For the purpose of the analysis I selected 14 hip hop texts by the three presented artists and two additional texts by a hip hop group Black Eyed Peas. The texts were elected in order to present the variations as thoroughly as possible. The presentation of the results, findings and conclusions should provide the readers with information they need to comprehend HHNL. In terms of lexis the reader is informed about the fact that there are words from standard American English, which they seem to be familiar with, however these do have different meanings

in HHNL. The results are also connected to the aforementioned sociolinguistic issues, as well as to the evolution of rap in hip hop. Grammatical results are then listed, describing the alterations occurring in HHNL.

### 3.2. 1 Lexical features

The analysis of the sample texts revealed a relatively large number of specific expressions :

#### Quantity:

In the analyses I found 17 slang terms for firearms (heat, tech, 9mm, gat, chrome, 44, berretta, AR-15, AK, K, Glock, Uzi, mac, clip, fo-five, nine), four of which are words connected to the technical parameters of the guns (like calibre) – those are 44, Fo-five and 9mm, nine; seven are names (or name derivations) of the guns given by the manufacturers – those are berretta, AR-15, tech, AK, K, Glock and Uzi, one is derived from a gun magazine (clip), one is the shortened form of a gun type (gat – from gatling gun) and the other four are general words connected to guns in different ways – heat, chrome, mac, choppa. In addition there were three terms used for shooting (pop, bust, spray) all of which are standard words in SAE and also one other term for a bullet (shell). Beside the slang terms HHNL also uses general SAE terms *gun*, *shoot* and *bullet*.

There were 10 terms for drugs (nick, cake, yayo, brick, rock, dro, dope, 8th, product, dime), all of which are general terms, obviously constructed as a code language – in order to hide the information from the police. Five of these terms refer to particular quantity of a certain drug (nick, cake, brick, 8th, dime), seven terms refer to a particular drug (nick, cake, yayo, brick, rock, dro, 8th), while three are interchangeable (can be used for various drugs) – dope, product, dime. However only three kinds of drugs are the denotata – cocaine, marijuana and in the two interchangeable terms heroine. Moreover there are other terms from the same so-to-say language pool. Two terms referring to police (5-0, jake), three terms referring to criminal activities or people engaging in it (hustler, thuggin', grind).

#### Word class

In the paper I analyzed nouns, adjectives, verbs, idiomatic expressions and names

#### Word – formation process

From the analysis it was obvious that there are certain word – formation processes which reoccur in HHNL. Those are clipping, acronymization and initialisms. All of these are typical for the simplification of the language.

#### Semantic aspect

From the analysis it is obvious that a lot of the new terms used in HHNL belong to the category described by H. Samy Alim which is a slang created as a code language for the people who have

conflict with the law and who need to hide the content of their communication from the police.

Second semantic aspect is closely connected with the code language. The analysis revealed that HHNL often uses personal names to describe different characteristics (Jacob – a nice man etc.). This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly it could be stated that this is done for the sole purpose of hiding the content of what one is saying, secondly it might be done to make language more „attractive“ and interesting. Language as everything else is a matter of fashion and new terms are simply fashionable and the old terms are not.

During the analysis it was also discovered that instead of using general terms for various common objects, speakers tend to use the names of certain people who produce these objects or the name of the brand of one particular product (saying Benz instead of car etc.). The reason for this kind of denomination is basically a way to present that one has money, which is quite typical for a person who grew up in the background of poverty, because all of the names used are of the expensive products (Lexus, Ferrari, Don Perignon etc.), as well as being fashionable and up to date. This also proves that materialism became an important part of HHNL as stated in the aforementioned history of rap and its evolution.

Additionally it was observed that HHNL often mentions people from the industry or show-business by their first name or their nicknames therefore for the listener to understand he has to be very familiar with the history of hip hop, as well as with the background of the artist (Jay-Z mentioning Tyran Smith in his lyrics as Ty Ty, who is his close friend etc.).

Lexis of HHNL also shows the development of rap as mentioned in the history of hip hop. While Tupac Shakur (early 1990s) addresses social issues of the African American community, 50 Cent and Jay-Z produce gangsta rap, talking about crime and violence. Their lyrics also back up the theory of growing materialism in the hip hop industry, as is obvious from the list of words referring to money (chedda, paper, doe) or expensive products (henessey, isuzu, ferrari, air max 95, Don Perignon).

The findings in the field of lexis are presented in the form of a dictionary, using urbandictionary.com (UD) as its main source and several other pages as secondary sources, those are wikipedia.com (Wi), onlineslangdictionary.com (OSD) and complex.com (CO). There are over 100 lexical terms presented in this analysis.

The list of the expressions identified in the text is presented in dictionary form in Appendix.

### 3.2.2 Grammatical features

When it comes to grammar in HHNL most people often assume that this „language“ is not grammatically correct and that its speakers do not have grammar. I have to disagree with that assumption and I would have to agree with Dr. Darin Howe who stated that HHNL has its own grammar. It is unfortunate that it is not codified or described, or prescribed for that matter, but there are rules there like in any other grammar. The analysis showed that there are patterns. There are several areas of interest in HHNL, those are different rules of negation creation, no inflections, absences of auxiliary verbs, absence of copula *be* and the others as listed below. This grammatical analysis should provide guidelines for the readers to comprehend HHNL more effectively.

#### **Complete absence of the auxiliary verb *be***

1. in present perfect: *If Jesus payin LeBron, I'm paying Dwayne Wade*
2. in present simple: *Rockin' like this my job, nigger, we can't help that we popular*

**Complete absence of the auxiliary verb *do* in questions:** *I thought we was cool, why you want me to die homie?*

#### **The usage of the double negative:**

- 4.1. *I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere*
- 4.2. *That's the sound of my tune. You say it ain't cool, but mama didn't raise no fool.*
- 4.3. *And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do.*

**Absence of the inflection of the verbs, generally:** the inflections are merging into one – only the first person singular inflection is used: *It never stop, when my mama ask me will I change*

**Absence of the inflections of the verb *be*:** the inflections are merging into one – only the first person singular inflection is used:

- 4.2. in present simple: *In my hood niggas is grimey*
- 4.3. in past simple: *I thought we was cool, why you want me to die homie?*

**Absence of the inflections of the auxiliary verb *do*:** the inflections are merging into one – only the first person singular inflection is used: *Every night I talk to god, but he don't say anything back*

**Absence of the copula *be*:** *That house party off the hook, until the shots go off*

#### **The usage of the verb *ain't* instead of other grammatical means of creating negation:**

- 4.2. Instead of the verb ***be* + *not*** in present simple: *Imma be a brother, but my name ain't Lehman*
- 4.3. Instead of the auxiliary verb ***have* + *not*** in present perfect: *Ain't here* is combined with participle *did* instead of past participle *done* which would be normally combined with *have* in creating present perfect: *And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do.*

4.4. Instead of the auxiliary verb **did + not** in past simple: *And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do.*

**The usage of the contracted form *Imma*:**

1. Instead of *I am going to* in future tense: *Imma be the whole...reason why you'd even wanna come to a show*
2. Instead of *I am / I'm* in present simple: *Yeah, Imma up at Brooklyn, now I'm down in Tribeca*

**The usage of the demonstrative pronoun *them* (in all of its forms – *dem, tham* etc.) instead of the definite article *the*:** *Man social service finis' come and take dem kids*

**Modifications of the spelling based on:**

(a) pronunciation:

*tha* stands for *the*: *I tell her yeah, but it's clear I'll always be tha same*

(b) pronunciation of the contracted forms:

*outta* stands for *out of*: *This all night money making got me outta touch*

*youza* stands for *you is*: *Youza poptart sweetheart, you soft in the middle*

ommission of the *g* from the *-ing* suffix of any verb: *It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes.*

*'em* stands for *them*: *First ship 'em dope & let 'em deal the brothers*

*'stead* stands for *instead*: *Learn to see me as a brother 'stead of 2 distant strangers*

*mo'* stands for *more*: *'Cause mo' black than white is smokin' crack tonight*

*'couse* stands for *because*: *'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the pay backs*

*cuz* stands for *because*: *Cuz in the hood true homies make you feel good*

*slow-mo* stands for *slow motion*: *Watching the whole world move in slow-mo*

(c) omission of the final *-r* in verbs ending in *r*; *holla* stands for *holler*: *I won't fuck, gimme a second, I'ma holla, I'ma see whats up*

*ya* stands for *your*: *Get hit with a K round, ya ass ain't gon' make it*

*ya* stands for *you*: *Put a gun in your face, tell ya open the safe*

*you'sa* stands for *you is*: *Cause you'se a middle man, but you don't understand*

*yo* stands for *your*: *I split yo lip*

verb ending in *t* + *you* creating contracted ending *-cha* – *eatcha* stands for *eat you*: *I eatcha for breakfast, the watch was an exchange for your necklace*

*nuttin'* stands for *nothing*: *And I ain't got to say nuttin you know that I'm thugin*

replacing *-s* suffix with *-z* suffix: *Damn niggaz switchin sides on niggaz just like that*

#### **4. Findings and conclusions**

After analyzing the sample texts, numerous differences between HHNL and standard American English were presented in terms of lexis, morphology and syntax. Many of the described features of HHNL are also features of Ebonics – a language of African Americans. Unfortunately there are not many sources that would study this language from purely linguistic view point. They are often sociolinguistic, political or cultural. This of course influences the language as presented in the findings from the field of lexis – there are many terms which function as a code language to hide information from the police, in drug dealing environment for example, however, the language itself is much more than semantics and there are other areas that could be examined.

The numerous differences found in HHNL are not always the standard. It has to be stated that part of the language belongs to the adjusted, modified group and part of it uses standard American English terms. These are often right next to each other and it is typical for HHNL because of the rhyming and verse artists use one of the options that suits the rhyme best. Not to mention the fact that for any two languages living close to each other it is completely natural to merge (Chicano English for example) and therefore it is only logical for AAL and standard American English to merge in HHNL.

The other finding about HHNL is that it is trying to be fashionable and thus uses numerous new terms in order to endure which is once again a very natural process in any language.

There are several functions of HHNL. That is aesthetic function – rhyming, which of course sometimes lead to usage of certain words in order to rhyme or fit the line in terms of syllables. The other function is the function of social identity – belonging to a group or differ from one. That is why HHNL is regionally very divergent. The other function is obviously the secret language – used to speak openly about illegal activities so that police would not understand it. There is also the function of fashion – as the word hip itself suggests – being up to date and finally there is the artistic form – functional language defining the art form known as hip hop.

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## 5. Czech Summary:

Tato bakalářská práce představuje výběrovou sondu do specifického jazyka hip hopové kultury v USA, který je úzce propojen s afroamerickou angličtinou. V úvodu jsou představeny důvody pro výběr práce a to rozšíření hip hopové kultury mezi veřejnost navzdory faktu, že mnozí nerozumějí jazyku, který tato kultura používá. Je tedy cílem zhruba načrtnout v čem se tento jazyk liší od standardní Americké angličtiny tak, aby čtenář byl schopen mu porozumět. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do dvou částí – teoretické a praktické. V teoretické části jsou nejdříve představeny dějiny hip hopové kultury od počátku sedmdesátých let v USA, v Bronxu, kde hip hop vzniká a čtenáři je přiblíženo čeho přesně se tato kultura týká. Jde nejen o hudbu, která byla prvopočátečním impulzem ke vzniku hip hopu, ale také o tanec s ní spojený a o grafiti. Za velmi vlivného průkopníka hip hopu je považován DJ Kool Herz, který se do New Yorku přestěhoval z Jamaiky, jejíž kulturní prostředí ho ovlivnilo a seznámilo společnost s fenoménem zvaným *toasting* – mluvením do hudby. Podrobněji se pak tato část soustřeďuje na dějiny rapu a rap jako takový, protože ten je předmětem jazykové studie. Dějiny rapu jsou samozřejmě mnohem starší než hip hopová kultura, jeho první formy se objevují již v Africe a vyvíjejí se v různých žánrech a stylech. Poslední a nejmodernější formou je takzvaný gangsta rap, komerčně velice úspěšný a celosvětově rozšířený a který nahradil rap věnující se sociální problematice černošských komunit. Druhá a třetí kapitola se pak věnují roli jazyka v hip hopové kultuře. Zkoumá se otázka zda se jedná o jazyk jako takový, či o dialekt. Role jazyka je pak zásadní z mnoha důvodů, jak ostatně můžeme vidět už jen v názvech různých písní, které se v hip hopu objevují (*Gangsta slovník, Nový jazyk rapu etc.*). Kromě toho, že je jazykové vyjádření důležité pro umělce, je důležitý i pro okolí. Pokud jde o jazyk, způsobuje hip hop mnoho kontroverzí. Kritici varují, že tento jazyk nabádá k násilí a kriminálnímu životnímu stylu, zatímco autoři tvrdí, že jen a pouze popisují nastalou situaci v jejich komunitách, kde už násilí a kriminální životní styl jsou součástí každodenního života. Ve čtvrté kapitole jsou tématem studie zabývající se hip hopen, obzvláště pak sociolingvistika. Z hlediska sociolingvistiky je tento umělecký směr a obzvláště jeho jazykové vyjádření velmi zajímavý. Sociolingvistika zkoumá dopad společnosti na jazyk. Hip hopová kultura původně vzniká v chudinských čtvrtích a ghetech. V této společnosti vzniká řada sociálních problémů, od užívání a prodeje drog, přes nechtěná těhotenství, až po přechovávání zbraní a násilí. Všechny tyto aspekty se odrážejí na jazyku, který tato společnost používá k vyjadřování. V této kapitole je také zmíněn kulturní fenomén zvaný *battle* – jazykový souboj raperů. V tomto souboji je cílem získání respektu a to ponížením svého oponenta. Jazyk je samozřejmě hlavním prostředkem. Je možné mít texty připravené dopředu a nebo je vymyslet na místě. Raper, který je schopný improvizace má samozřejmě výhodu, protože může použít cokoliv se během souboje stane ve svůj prospěch. V další kapitole jsou čtenáři představeny způsoby projevu v

hip hopu. Těchto projevů je několik druhů a blíže jsou zkoumány jen tři relevantní pro tuto práci. Jsou to dva způsoby projevu, které spojují členy této komunity a velmi dobře dokreslují případnost ke skupině. Třetím a posledním je v ten nejdůležitější pro jazykový rozbor a tím je “označování” (signifying). Tento termín popisuje jev, ke kterému dochází, když si účastníci hovoru nepřejí aby jim kdokoliv jiný rozuměl. V této komunitě, dotčené kriminalitou je to jev běžný. Dochází zde k pozměňování významu slov označujících obzvláště policii, kriminální činnost, drogy etc. Tato slova si svůj význam ponechávají velmi krátce, tudíž jsou pro okolí nesrozumitelná, což je jejich účelem. K označování těchto činností jsou pak používána běžná slova každodenního užití a jejich význam je přeměněn. I pro členy těchto komunit je někdy těžké sledovat všechny jazykové změny ke kterým dochází, proto se říká, že jakmile jste nějaký čas nepřítomni, už nemůžete rozumět. Šestá kapitola se věnuje spojitosti hip hopového jazyka s afroamerickou angličtinou. Jak již bylo zmíněno, hip hop původně vznikl v jižním Bronxu, USA a to v afroamerických a latinoamerických ghetech. Je tedy přirozené, že základem jazyka, který hip hop používá je afroamerická angličtina. Je tedy představena z lingvistického hlediska a jsou popsány její odlišnosti od standardní americké angličtiny. Poté jsou představeni interpreti, jejichž tvorba byla analyzována v praktické výzkumné části bakalářské práce. Jsou to tři z nejúspěšnějších raperů – Jay-Z, 50 Cent a Tupac. Tupac je zástupcem hip hopu, který vznikl na počátku devadesátých let a věnoval se sociální problematice černošských komunit, oproti tomu 50 Cent a Jay-Z jsou zástupci takzvaného gangsta rapu. Všichni tři pocházejí z chudinských afroamerických čtvrtí, všichni tři se věnovali kriminální činnosti a jejich jazyk je tedy zcela autentický.

Sama výzkumná lexikální část je pak představena slovníkovou formou a je v ní zkoumaná odlišnost lexikálních prvků v jazyce hip hopu od lexikálních prvků standardní americké angličtiny. Lexikální prvky jsou prezentovány formou slovníku a také jsou jmenovány slovtvorné procesy, které se v jazyce hip hopu vyskytují, jakož i tématické okruhy, opakující se v textech. V druhé části jsou pak zkoumány morfologické a syntaktické odlišnosti v jazyce hip hopu od morfologických a syntaktických prvků standardní americké angličtiny. Z výzkumu lexikálních prvků lze vyčíst mnoho zmíněných otázek. Jednak se ukazuje, že slova používaná v tomto jazyce jsou často slova standardní Americké angličtiny s pozměněným významem, tedy slova využívaná ke skrývání obsahu předávaných informací před policií. Mnohá tato slova odkazují na věci spojované s kriminální činností – zbraně, drogy, vraždy, peníze, prodej drog, krádeže apod. Toto také poukazuje na již zmíněnou tematiku současného rapu, zvaného gangsta rap. Dále je z lexikální analýzy evidentní, že popularitu získávají texty zmiňující materiální prostředky raperů. Objevují se zmínky o drahých autech a různých dalších luxusních produktech, které dotýčný vlastní. Toto je z hlediska sociolingvistiky běžným jevem u této chudobou dotčené populace. Považují za celoživotní úspěch to, že navzdory svému původu dosáhli obrovského materiálního bohatství a jakoby ten samotný fakt

nestačil považují za nutné to prezentovat veřejně. Pro takovouto osobu mají v jazyce hip hopu dokonce slovo, oproti standardní americké angličtině, ve které je třeba ji opsat více slovy. Lexikální rozbor také ukazuje, že velmi populární slovotvornou metodou je tvorba zkratk – což poukazuje na zjednodušování jazyka. Závěrem jsou prezentovány funkce tohoto jazyka a to estetická funkce, která částečně upravuje slovní výběr a to jednak kvůli rýmu a také kvůli počtu slabik; sociální funkce – případnosti ke skupině nebo odlišnosti od ní; funkce jazyka jako prostředku utajení předávaných informací; funkce módní – taková, která udržuje jazyk současným a moderním a závěrem funkce umělecká v hip hopu jako takovém.

**Anotace:**

Tato bakalářská práce představuje výběrovou sondu do specifického jazyka hip hopové kultury v USA, který je úzce propojen s afroamerickou angličtinou. V teoretické části je představena hip hopová kultura; její historie; jazyk, který používá; studie, které se jazykem hip hopu zabývají (zvláště sociolingvistika); způsoby projevu v hip hopu a spojitost hip hopového jazyka s afroamerickou angličtinou, kde jsou vyjmenovány i určité lingvistické charakteristiky afroamerické angličtiny. Poté jsou představeni interpreti, jejichž tvorba byla analyzována v praktické výzkumné části bakalářské práce. Sama výzkumná lexikální část je pak představena slovníkovou formou a je v ní zkoumaná odlišnost lexikálních prvků v jazyce hip hopu od lexikálních prvků standardní americké angličtiny. V druhé části jsou pak zkoumány morfologické a syntaktické odlišnosti v jazyce hip hopu od morfologických a syntaktických prvků standardní americké angličtiny.

**Abstract:**

This thesis presents a selective survey of the specifics of the language of the hip hop culture in the United States of America, which is closely connected with African-American English. Theoretical part is an introduction to hip hop culture, its history, language it uses; studies that deal with the language of hip-hop (especially sociolinguistics) are presented , as well as modes of discourse and the association with African-American English. Afterwards artists are whose lyrics are used for the research are introduced. Practical part of the thesis then concentrates on describing the differences between hip hop nation language and standard American English in terms of lexical and grammatical features.

**Keywords:**

HHNL – hip hop nation language, lexical differences, grammatical differences, sociolinguistics, modes of discourse, SAE – standard American English

## APPENDIX:

### List of lexical items:

#### NOUNS

**AK** *n.* initialism, stands for Automatic Kalashnikov, a rifle (UD): *What you know about AK's and AR 15's?*

**AR-15** *n.* common assault rifle, AR stands for a company manufacturing these firearms ArmaLite (UD/Wi): *What you know about AK's and AR 15's?*

**berretta** *n.* another word for a firearm (UD): *And if you play with my paper, you gotta meet my berretta.*

**Brenda** *n.* generally refers to an outgoing, pretty girl; however 2Pac Shakur used it in reference to teenage mothers and as such it was also used by other artists (50 Cent) (UD): *Pac is gone and Brendas still throwin babies in the garbage.*

**hustler** *n.* a person who makes money by doing criminal activities (UD): *I'm a hustler, how the fuck I'm supposed to eat when its hot.*

**skipper** *n.* child who excels in everything, cool kid (UD): *I'm the boss on this boat you can call me Skipper.*

**juggernaut** *n.* a villain from X-Man, stands for a person who can do everything (UD): *The Juggernauts of this rap shit.*

**uzi** *n.* A submachine gun, manufactured by Uziel Gal (UD/Wi): *When I let lose wit this uzi and just shoot through your Izuzu.*

**shawty** *n.* Aa term originated in Atlanta, means a pretty girl, it is a southern version of the term shorty: *I'm back in the game shawty, to +Rule+ and conquer.*

**cracker** *n.* A slang term for people of european ancestry, a pejorative word for a white person, opposite term to nigga (UD): *Next time you in the hood and see an OG ITS OG DUMB*

*MOTHERFUCKING CRACKER.* **coup** *n.* A slang term for a car (UD): *I catch ya stuntin in the Bentley Coup cockpit.*

**hoodrat** *n.* A girl from the ghetto with loose morals (UD): *The hoodrats they say "He so crazy".*

**don dada** *n.* The most respected Don (UD): *The original don dada nobody bomb harda.*

**nigga** *n.* term of enderment used between african americans; derived from a derogatory word nigger. 2Pac Shakur has stated the difference between the two: NIGGER - a black man with a slavery chain around his neck, NIGGA - a black man with a gold chain on his neck. (*Niggers was the ones on the rope, hanging off the thing; niggas is the ones with gold ropes, hanging out at clubs*). Tupac, who has been credited with legitimizing the term, said his song *N.I.G.G.A. stood for "Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished.* (UD/Wi): *This if for my niggas on the block, twisting trees and cigars.*



**homie** *n.* embellished clipping; formed from a word homeboy, which means a close friend (UD): *I thought we was cool, why you want me to die homie?*

**OG** *n.* initialism; from initial letters of a phrase or an idiom; stands for Original Gangsta (UD): *Catch me at the X with OG at a Yankee game*

**crip** *n.* refers to a member of a gang earning easy money from drug sale (UD): *You should know I bleed Blue, but I aint a crip tho.*

**rock** *n.* form of cocaine (UD): *Welcome to the melting pot, corners where we selling rock.*

**click** *n.* means one's crew; misspelled clique (UD): *But I got a gang of n-ggas walking with my click though.*

**mac** *n.* a slang term for a gun (UD): *I move on you wit' that Mac mayn.*

**mayn** *n.* a different way to say man, supposedly comes from a spanish accent (UD): *So when the cops come they ain't see shit mayn.*

**rida'** *n.* see rider

**rider** *n.* Term of admiration for a person from the ghetto, who is loyal and knows his way around the ghetto (UD): *Just for the simple fact they know that I'm a rida'.*

**5-0** *n.* refers to the police; perhaps derived from the television show Hawaii 5-0 which is about policemen (UD): *Used to see 5-0 throw the crack by the bench.*

**fo-five** *n.* refers to a firearm; 45 is a gun calibre, non – standard spelling of the first word **four** (UD): *I'll fo-five 'em*

**g** *n.* Initialism for the word grand which means a thousand dollars (UD): *"I made a G today" But you made it in a sleazy way.*

**yayo** *n.* a slang term for cocaine (UD): *Teach ya how to turn yayo in to doe.*

**thang** *n.* other word for a thing (UD): *And coming new, he'd do tha same thang if he could.*

**doe** *n.* a slang term for money (UD): *Teach ya how to turn yayo in to doe.*

**Don** 1. *n.* Don Perignon (UD): *And we sip DP till the Don stop bubblin.* 2. *n.* the head of the mafia, boss, the top man (UD): *I'm like Paulie in Goodfellas, you can call me the Don.*

**dirt** *n.* a slang term for criminal activities (UD): *See me I put in work, man I been doin' dirt.*

**flags** *n.* gang colors (UD): *Nigga's wearing flags cause the colors match they clothes.*

**6** *n.* six figure mercedes (UD): *Now I'm rich, see the 20's spinnin', looking mean on the 6.*

**clip** *n.* firearm magazine, can also stand for a gun or a bullet (UD): *Till I bust a clip in your face, pussy, this beef ain't over.*

**jake** *n.* the police (UD): *Run the light, then pop at Jake, trust me son, niggas will go hard for that cake.*

**plate** *n.* a 45-pound weight used in the gym (UD): *More plate on the back, straight squeezing a Mak.*

**chrome** *n.* a slang term for a handgun (UD): *Pac tried to front so I waved the chrome on his ass.*

**44** *n.* a 44 caliber pistol, a Magnum (UD): *The shells from twains 4-4, blew the hinge off her do'.*

**dawg** *n.* refers to a friend (UD): *Blood in my eye dawg and I can't see*

**gat** *n.* a slang word for a gun, contraction of a word gattling gun (UD): *I know he protecting me, but I still stay with my gat.*

**k** *n.* initialism, refers to a particular gun AK 47 (UD): *Get hit with a K round, ya ass ain't gon' make it.*

**dro'** *n.* refers to hydroponically grown marihuana (UD): *A lil dro', a lil hennessy, a nigga just don't know how to act.*

**nine-millie (9mm)** *n.* slang term for a firearm, comes from a 9 milimetr calibre of semi automatic guns and sub machine guns (UD): *Me and Chilly in your city wit' a couple nine-milli's.*

**tech** *n.* a slang term for a relatively cheap gun, made by the Intratec company in Miami (UD): *In my nightmares, niggas keep pulling techs on me.*

**nightcap** *n.* last drink / smoke of the night (UD): *Now we can have a lil' drink you know a nightcap.*

**whip** *n.* a really good expensive car (UD): *Then we go through the strip, hangin' up out the whip.*

**hood** *n.* abbreviattion of the word neighbourhood (UD): *In my hood niggas got love for me, but I don't go no where without my strap.*

**dope** *n.* slang term for marihuana, supposedly used by the people who do not use drugs / slang term for heroin, supposedly used by the people who do use drugs (UD): *I wanna live good, so shit I sell dope for a fo-finger ring.*

**playa hater** *n.* a person, who is jealous of someone and therefore traduces them and talks in a negative way about them (UD): *Remain strong in this planet full of playa haters.*

**shorty** *n.* affectionate term for a girl / girlfriend (UD): *You drive me crazy shorty.*

**hoopty** *n.* any car, which not in a very good condition, cheap, emberrasing to drive (Comes in two flavors, White Trash and Black Ghetto ) (UD): *If I went back to a hoopty from a Benz, would you poof and disappear like some of my friends?*

**cop** *n.* 1. slang term for a police officer (UD): *So when the cops come they ain't see shit mayn.*

**d** *n.* initialism, stands for a word douche / douchbag, which is a derogatory term for a person with various negative qualities (UD): *I don't trust a mothafuckin' soul when the D's come they fool*

**8<sup>th</sup>** *n.* 3,5 grams of marihuana (UD): *To have more than a 8th, niggas'll come to your place Put a gun in your face, tell ya open the safe.*

**crib** *n.* a place of residence (UD): *Niggas run through my crib, to holla at the kid.*

**'caine** *n.* abbreviation of the term cocaine (UD): *My soldiers slangin' 'caine, sunny, snow, in sleet or rain.*

**pops** *n.* father (UD): *I grew up without my Pops.*

**flows** *n.* lyrics (UD): *It feels like my flows been hot for so long.*

**baller** *n.* a person who succeeded, originally it meant a basketball player who managed to play professionally and the meaning then extended to a criminal who succeeded in his career (UD): *I'll knock a baller off his pivot with this motherfuckin' choppa'.*

**jacob** *n.* referring to a friend(UD): *Now i'm goin back to Cali with my Jacob*

**product** *n.* a slang term for a drug, various kinds (UD): *Man I ain't give them lil niggas no product.*

**choppa** *n.* a big automatic firearm, usually AK-47 (UD): *They swear to God that it's me sellin the choppas.*

**shells** *n.* a slang term for bullets (UD): *Them shells start poppin and bodies get to droppin*

**homo-case** *n.* homicide: *As your heart starts to race cause a robbery could turn into a homo-case.*

**heat** *n.* a slang term for a gun (UD): *If you play me close, for sure I'm gonna pop my heat.*

**brick** *n.* a slang term for a pound or a kilogram of a drug (UD): *Cause I hustle baby, this rap shit is so easy I'm gettin' what you get for a brick to talk greasy.*

**cake** *n.* a slang term for a kilogram of cocaine (UD): *Run the light, then pop at Jake, trust me son, niggas will go hard for that cake.*

**dime** *n.* 10 dollars worth of drugs, a small bag of drugs (UD): *So hurry up and copy and go selling nicks and dimes.*

**MVP** *n.* initialism, stands for most valuable player (UD): *Go head' envy me, I'm raps MVP and I ain't goin nowhere so you can get to know me.*

**government cheese** *n.* money that people get from the state, the term was originated when Ronald Regan gave free cheese to the poor during his administration (UD): *An get guns away in the hood like government cheese.*

**grind** *n.* to make money by going around the neighborhood selling drugs (UD): *We do this all the time, right now we on the grind.*

**nine** *n.* a slang term for a gun, 9 mm calibre (UD): *What makes you think that I wont run up on you with the nine.*

**wanksta** *n.* a gangster wannabe (UD): *We said you a wanksta and you need to stop frontin'.*

**paper** *n.* a slang term for money (UD): *And if you play with my paper, you gotta meet my berretta.*

**chedda** *n.* a slang term for a lot of cash, often used to buy drugs, weapons and other illegal commodities (UD): *I got the sickest vendetta when it come to the chedda and if you play with my paper, you gotta meet my berretta.*

**nick** *n.* a small bag of marijuana, the term is an abbreviation of the word nickel, because this small bag is very cheap, 5 dollars worth of drugs (UD): *So hurry up and copy and go selling nicks and dimes.*

## VERBS

**jack** v. to steal (UD): *Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up, crack you up and pimp smack you up.*

**rolled on** v. To get hit by multiple people (UD): *You can stun if you want and yo ass'll get rolled on (It's 50).*

**bust** v. To shoot a gun (UD): *I love to hit the block, I love my two Glocks, love to bust shots but you don't hear me though.*

**slangin'** v. To sell marijuana, cocaine or other drugs (UD): *My soldiers slangin' 'caine, sunny, snow, in sleet or rain.*

**crack** v. to hit a person (UD): *Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up, crack you up and pimp smack you up.*

**smack** v. to talk about a person in a very bad way, to slander (UD): *Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up, crack you up and pimp smack you up.*

**swerve** v. to party (UD) 2. v. to drink alcoholic beverages (UD): *If ya not busy tonight then we can swerve.*

**bounce check** v. to return checks from the bank because of insufficient funds (UD): *Honeys in debt, may be bouncin' them checks.*

**buck** v. slang term for fighting (UD): *niggas might buck at me, so I keep somethin' around to buck back*

**pop** v. slang term for shooting somebody (UD): *Co-opperate or Doc will have to op-porate, niggas will pop at you. Run the light, then pop at Jake, trust me son, niggas will go hard for that cake.*

**thuggin'** v. making a living of various criminal activities, being nonchalant about life (UD): *Now would you leave me if you're father found out I was thuggin'?*

**stunt** v. To show off, to get attention (UD): *I catch ya stuntin in the Bentley Coup cockpit.*

**spray** v. to shoot a firearm rapidly, using a lot of bullets (UD): *The snitches they say "He tried to spray me".*

**murk** v. a slang term for murdering, beating a person to death (UD): *These thirsty niggas will lurk, then you'll have to catch 'em and murk 'em.*

**front** v. abbreviation of affront, means to disrespect (UD): *Front and find out how my P-40 glock hit.*

**up** v. To leave, to get away from somewhere quickly (UD): *Would you believe me? Or up and leave me?*

**trip** v. to overreact, get mad. The term comes from the context of the hallucinogen drug usage and the behaviour afterwards which is usually non standard (UD): *Crack money slow so you know niggas is trippin'.*

**snatch** v. to grab, to steal (UD): *My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch.*

**copy** v. to follow or imitate exactly (UD): *So hurry up and copy and go selling nicks and dimes.*

**hustle** v. make money by doing criminal activities (UD): *Cause I hustle baby, this rap shit is so easy.*

## ADJECTIVES

**laid out** adj. beaten, hit, fought (UD): *For so long when niggas get laid out.*

**spiked out** n. sitting court-side, i.e. near or at the level of basketball players during a game (UD): *I'll be spiked out at the next NBA match, I can trip a referee.*

**wet** adj. Dead, the term comes from the fact that there is a lot of blood when a person is shoot dead (UD/OSD): *Be easy, stop the bullshit, you get your whole crew wet.*

**bonkers** adj. crazy, wild, mad (UD): *I'm the hardest from New York, my flow is bonkers.*

**outta pocket** adj. not smart, out of control, foolish (UD): *If you a pimp why ya hoes stay outta pocket.*

**noodles** adj. crazy (UD): *Till the chicks go noodles.*

**strapped** adj. a slang term describing the fact that one is equipped with a firearm, comes from a strap in which the gun is carried (UD): *I love to pump crack, love to stay strapped.*

**grimey** adj. backstabbing (UD): *In my hood niggas is grimey.*

**fly** adj. means cool, trandy (UD): *Imma be the flyest chick (so fly)*

**dope** 1. adj. means good, fashionable (UD): *If I can move a few packs and get the hat, now that'd be dope.*

## IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

**bleed blue** idiomatic expression, referring to royal origins, comes from the assumption that royal blood is blue (UD): *You should know I bleed Blue, but I aint a crip tho.*

**hit the block** idiomatic expression, means for a gang to surround a part of the neighborhood (UD): *I love to hit the block, I love my two Glocks love to bust shots but you don't hear me though.*

**pump crack** vp. the act of selling cocaine (UD): *I love to pump crack, love to stay strapped.*

**wat up?** a different way of saying **What is up?** which is a question that stands for a hello, has several other forms **T's up?** **whazzup**, **whassup** (UD): *Say Wat up to Ty Ty, still sipping Mai Tais.*

## NAMES

**Ty Ty** Tyran Smith's – New Zeland rugby player's – nickname (CO): *Say Wat up to Ty Ty, still sipping Mai Tais*

**Cali** name short for the state of California, used by those who are not from California (UD): *Now i'm goin back to Cali with my Jacob.*

**Air Max 95** a shoe model (UD): *That's 10 years I told Pooh in 95' I'd kill you if you try me for my Air Max 95s.*

**hennessy** name, refers to cognac, the term comes from the brand Hennessey which produces cognac (UD): *And in tha end drinking hennessy made all my enemies envy me.*

**P-40** name, american all-metal fighter aircraft (Wi): *Front and find out how my P-40 glock hit glock n.* glocks are semi-automatic pistols produced by Glock Ges. m. b. H. (Wi): *Front and find out how my P-40 glock hit.*

**DP** name, initialism, stands for Don Perignon: *And we sip DP till the Don stop bubblin.*

**yonkers** the city in the state of New York next to Bronx: *All the other hard niggas, they come from Yonkers.*

**Suge** a name, Suge Night is a former head of the Death Row Records (UD): *Sell his soul for cheap, trade his life to be Suge.*

**Isuzu** a term which refers to any car made by the japanese car company (UD): *When I let lose wit this uzi and just shoot through your Izuzu.*

**Bed-stuy** stands for Bedford Stuyvesant in central Brooklyn (UD): *Me I'm up at Bed-stuy, home of that boy Biggie.*

**Lil Bow Wow** Shad Gregory Moss, a rapper who started his career as a child and thus used a word Lil' in his name (Wi): *We riding 'round with guns the size of Lil Bow Wow.*

**Ferrari F-50** a car produced by Ferrari, 50 Cent drives it and he uses it as his other nickname (UD/Wi): *It's 50 a.k.a Ferrari F-50.*

**Bloodz** name, a street gang from Los Angeles that has a feud with another Los Angeles gang called Crips, the name comes from their red color, which represents blood (UD): *In the USA the big CIA the Bloodz and the Crips and the KKK.*

**Crips** name, a street gang from Los Angeles, their colors are blue, they have a famous feud with another Los Angeles street gang Bloodz (UD): *In the USA the big CIA the Bloodz and the Crips and the KKK.*

**B.E.P.** name, initialism, stands for American band Black Eyed Peas (UD): *B.E.P. we definite-ly on some next-level shit.*

**utp** name, initialism for up-town projects record label (UD): *I represent it cause I'm in it, UTP until I'm finished.*

**G-Unit** name, stands for Guerilla Unit, 50 Cent's band (UD): *I'm a G-Unit motherfucking soldier nigga.*

**Pac** name, stands for Tupac Amaru Shakur, American west-coast rapper (UD): *The feds didn't know*

*much, when Pac got shot.*

**Biggie** name, American east coast rapper who was shot dead in 1997 Notorious B.I.G. (UD): *Me I'm up at Bed-stuy, home of that boy Biggie.*

**Knicks, Nets** names, NBA teams (Wi): *Sitting courtside, Knicks and Nets give me high five.*